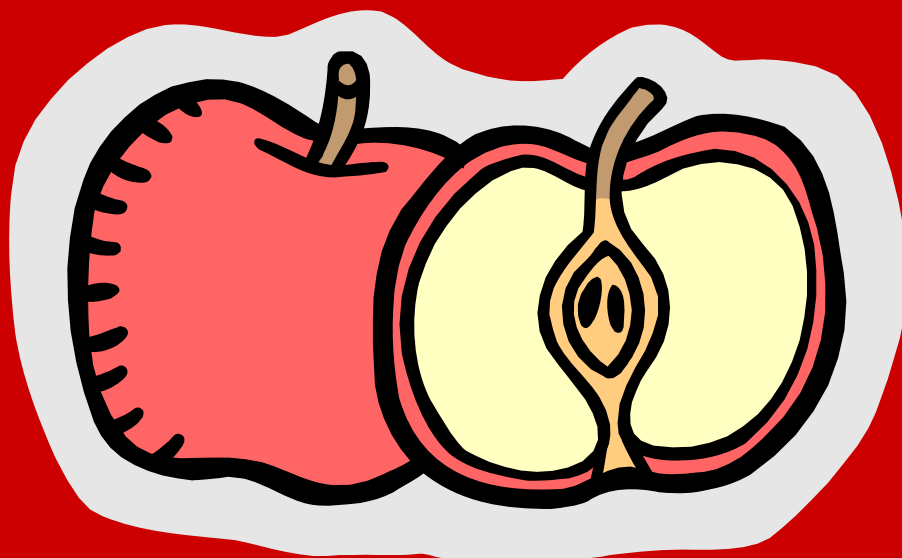


# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## GETTING TO THE CORE

OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
AND OUTREACH



## MAKING AN IMPACT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Retailers nationwide strive to be good corporate citizens. They abound with programs aimed at creating and maintaining positive relationships with local communities. As this toolkit will demonstrate, an easy and often overlooked way for retailers to serve their communities is to partner with local service organizations to conduct food stamp outreach.

Conducting outreach, i.e. increasing awareness of and participation in the Food Stamp program via a community network of partners, provides a “win-win” scenario for all involved: retailers nurture community bonds, develop customer loyalty, and increase sales; local economies are infused with additional revenue, a potential reduction in healthcare expenses, and potential increase in worker productivity; partners receive much needed assistance with their mission, thereby allowing limited resources to be redirected; and eligible nonparticipating people and families gain access to better nutrition and free up limited family resources for other household responsibilities.



“Food Stamps are the first line of defense against hunger in our community. Making sure low income people receive food stamps accomplishes many things. First, and most importantly, people get fed. Second, community and faith-based organizations such as ours are relieved of having to provide a higher level of food assistance. Third, the local grocers do business with customers that they may not have otherwise and fourth, we are all healthier and happier.”

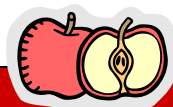
--Bill Bolling, Executive Director  
Atlanta Community Food Bank  
Atlanta, GA

“A successful redemption program probably means that we are successfully servicing the needs of our community. By being able to meet our customers’ needs during a particular time in their lives, we are often able to establish a relationship that outlives the time a person is eligible for food stamps. In that case we benefit from that customer both now and in the future. Food stamp redemption is a way to get your best customer in the front door and to establish a long-term relationship with that customer.”

--George Matics, Purchasing Director  
Cardenas Markets, Inc.  
Ontario, CA

## Retailer tools

- ✓ Underwrite printing of outreach materials
- ✓ Underwrite paid advertising and local media
- ✓ Advertise food stamp information on grocery carts
- ✓ Print FSP information on receipts and grocery bags
- ✓ Include food stamp benefit information in grocery bags
- ✓ Provide food stamp information in the checkout display area
- ✓ Play Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on in-store radio
- ✓ Include flyers and brochures in mailings and weekly circulars
- ✓ Allow eligibility prescreening to be conducted in the store or outside of it
- ✓ Design, produce, and post promotional materials about food stamp benefits in the store





## DISPELLING MYTHS AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Increasing food stamp participation by conducting outreach activities must begin with recognizing and understanding the barriers that prevent participation. The primary purpose of outreach is not only to promote community awareness of the FSP, but also to reduce these barriers. You can participate by orienting your employees and by partnering with community groups to raise awareness of the nutritional benefits to which they are entitled. Common myths that prevent underserved populations from receiving the benefits to which they are entitled are listed below and on the next page. As you conduct outreach, incorporating tools to dispel such myths can play an instrumental role in increasing participation.

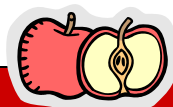
### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

As a retailer you may come into contact with eligible, nonparticipating people much more frequently than other community members. Through your Food Stamp Program outreach efforts, you can get the facts out and help dispel these myths that often times serve as barriers to participation. Offering space for nutrition education and health fairs held at retail locations are a great way to do this. Further examples of what you can do to alleviate hunger in your community are found throughout this toolkit.



## Myths and Truths about Food Stamp Benefits and Seniors

- MYTH:** Elderly people have to go to the food stamp office for an interview.
- TRUTH:** If an elderly person is not able to go to the food stamp office, he or she may request a telephone interview.
- MYTH:** You have to go to the food stamp office every few months to keep getting benefits.
- TRUTH:** Elderly people can get benefits for up to 2 years at a time.
- MYTH:** Elderly people are only allowed \$2,000 in resources.
- TRUTH:** The limit for elderly households (containing at least one elderly person) is \$3,000 (excluding their home or car).
- MYTH:** Elderly people do not receive credit for medical and prescription drug bills.
- TRUTH:** Medical bills that exceed \$35 a month may be deducted unless an insurance company or someone who is not a household member pays them.
- MYTH:** Other people need food stamps more than the elderly and if an elderly person is certified for food stamps, they will be taking them away from others.
- TRUTH:** The Food Stamp Program is an entitlement program—everyone who applies and qualifies will get benefits.
- MYTH:** Elderly households who receive food stamps cannot receive meals-on-wheels.
- TRUTH:** Many households can receive food stamps and still get meals-on-wheels. Sometimes these meals can be purchased with food stamp benefits.



## Myths and Truths about Food Stamp Benefits and Working People



**MYTH:** Food stamps are welfare.

**TRUTH:** The Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program.

**MYTH:** Only unemployed people can get food stamps.

**TRUTH:** Most people who work at low-wage jobs can get food stamp benefits.

**MYTH:** You can't get food stamps if you get unemployment.

**TRUTH:** People who get unemployment may still qualify for food stamp benefits.

**MYTH:** If you have too many assets, you can't get food stamps.

**TRUTH:** Your household may have up to \$2,000 in assets (excluding your home or car).

**MYTH:** You can't get food stamps if you own a car.

**TRUTH:** You can get food stamp benefits, even if you own a car.

**MYTH:** You can't get food stamps if you have a savings account.

**TRUTH:** Your household may have up to \$2,000 in assets (excluding your home or car).

**MYTH:** Food stamps have to be paid back.

**TRUTH:** People who get the amount of benefits they are eligible for do not have to pay them back.

**MYTH:** Food stamps are not worth applying for since you only get \$10.

**TRUTH:** The amount of benefits depends on household size, income and certain expenses. The average household monthly benefit in FY 2005 was over \$212.

**MYTH:** Other people will know I use food stamps.

**TRUTH:** People who get food stamp benefits get an electronic card and other people will most likely not know you use food stamp benefits.

**MYTH:** Food stamps are only for families.

**TRUTH:** Food stamp benefits are for anyone who applies and qualifies.



"To reach common ground, we need to go to higher ground.  
Together with our business and government leaders, we can  
build community and economic prosperity for all."

Daniella Levine, Executive Director  
Human Service Coalition  
Miami, FL

